



*U.S. Fire Administration*

# National Arson Awareness Week

Wildfire Arson: Preparedness and Prevention / Media Kit

May 7-13, 2006

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**April 2006**



**Homeland  
Security**







## Recent Wildfire Arson Incidents

The following incidents have been compiled by USEFA from online newspapers across the United States during March of 2006 alone:

### Authorities Suspect Arson in Okla. Fires

OKLAHOMA CITY, Mar. 2, 2006

Authorities took one man into custody on suspicion of arson and were searching for another after a wildfire in southwestern Oklahoma destroyed at least 30 homes and forced the evacuation of two schools, a nursing home and area businesses. The fire was one of several fueled by gusty winds and high temperatures, and firefighters remained at the scene for a second day Thursday. Seven firefighters have been injured while fighting the blazes.

### 11 die as winds push fires across Texas Panhandle

March 14, 2006

On Monday, firefighters struggled to stop the fires that were blamed for the deaths of 11 people, four of them in a crash on a smoke-shrouded highway over the weekend. Four more bodies were found Monday evening in a car that had crashed into a ravine, and authorities suspected those deaths were also caused by the wildfires. About 1,900 people in seven counties were evacuated. Eleven fires burned across an estimated nearly 700,000 acres Monday, up from 663,000 over the weekend. State fire crews fought more than 160 blazes in one 24-hour period.

### Arsonist blamed for Charlotte brush fires {Florida}

March 21, 2006

An investigation into Monday's brush fire in Charlotte County has turned into a criminal investigation after fire officials ruled the fire was deliberately set. The fire burned about thirty acres in Port Charlotte near El Jobean.

### Drought, winds spread fires in county, state {North Carolina}

March 22, 2006

Forecasts for rain early this week may help dangerously dry conditions that have already contributed to more than 1,000 wild fires across the state for the month of March. So far this month, 1,545 fires have destroyed more than 8,120 acres in the state.

## National Arson Awareness Week May 7-13, 2006

The U.S. Fire Administration (USFA) and the International Association of Arson Investigators (IAAI) announce the 2006 Arson Awareness Week theme: "Wildfire Arson – Preparedness and Prevention."

### The Goal This Year is to Focus the Public's Attention on the Wildfire Arson Problem, particularly in the Wildland-Urban Interface.

Arson and other uncontrolled wildland fires pose a serious threat to lives, property, and natural resources in our rural and sub-urban communities. Conditions are particularly hazardous in the wildland-urban interface (WUI), where structures and other human developments meet, or intermingle, with forests and grasslands.

The damage associated with wildland arson, acreage and dollar losses, is more than all other causes associated with wildland fires. The increased risk of wildland fires, associated with the rapid development of structures in the wildland-urban interface, makes it all that more important to develop arson prevention and preparedness programs.

Preventing, mitigating and preparing for wildland arson are important steps in protecting lives, minimizing property loss and providing for firefighter safety.

And to do all of these things requires an effort by property owners, fire service organizations and local business and government leaders.

### Community and Individual Involvement is Critical.

Getting stories into the media about wildland fires and how your community can help fight this problem is important in a number of ways. Stories can increase public awareness of the issues surrounding the causes of wildland arson fires and how citizens and community groups can learn about the ways to prevent wildland fires or at least mitigate the impact of them. They can also learn to be better steward of their neighborhood by staying vigilant for suspicious vehicles and persons and by having support systems in place such as a neighborhood watch group.



Examples of National Arson Awareness Week Activities

The following activities can be used by all communities to kick off Arson Awareness Week.

- The mayor and/or city council can issue an Arson Awareness Week Proclamation. (A sample proclamation is attached, or one can be developed that focuses on an individual community’s needs.)
- Where appropriate, local fire, police, and natural resource departments jointly can release information on wildfire arson, and ask for the community’s help in educating parents and children about the consequences of wildfires and wildfire arson. The joint, local effort can be launched via a press conference, a call-in talk (radio or TV) show, or any other highly visible event that attracts good media coverage. Pubic events and trade show have been great places to get this message out to the community.
- Letters to the editor or editorials to local newspapers are encouraged, since most newspapers actively solicit “letters to the editor.” This is one of the most popular ways of getting the message read. Don’t forget “Dear Abby” or similar columns that are throughout the country.
- Plan informational presentations during Arson Awareness Week at local schools.
- Enlist the help of other organizations to help distribute materials and promote awareness. Service organizations such as Rotary Clubs, Kiwanis Clubs, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, and faith-based organizations who share responsibility, interest and knowledge about arson issues are readily recognized resources in most communities.

Arson Awareness Week Sample Resolution

WHEREAS, wildfire arson is a serious crime that affects all people and can only be stopped when citizens realize the physical and emotional damage suffered by arson victims; and

WHEREAS, wildfire arson poses a serious threat to lives, property and natural resources; and

WHEREAS, the destruction associated with wildfire arson is more than any of all other causes associated with wildland fires;

NOW, THEREFORE, I [Governor’s or Mayor’s name], [Governor or Mayor] of [City or State], on behalf of its citizens do hereby proclaim May 7-13, 2006, to be Arson Awareness Week;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the [Governor’s name or Mayor’s name] and [insert Cabinet or Council, etc.] pay special tribute to all fire service and law enforcement investigative agencies for their dedicated and tireless service;

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, the [insert Governor’s or Mayor’s name] and [insert Cabinet or Council, etc.] of the [insert City or State] have hereunto subscribed their names and have caused the Official Seal of the [insert City and County or State] to be hereunto affixed in the

[City of State] of \_\_\_\_\_ on this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ 2006.

\_\_\_\_\_ [Signature]



# Arson Awareness Week Proclamation

## National Arson Awareness Week 2006 Wildfire Arson – Preparedness and Prevention

WHEREAS, wildfire arson is not simply a regional problem but a serious national problem causing loss of life and major destruction of homes, businesses, and natural resources;

WHEREAS, wildfire arson is a serious crime that affects all people and can be stopped only when citizens realize the toll that wildfire arson takes on communities;

WHEREAS, citizens and their communities need to be vigilant about preventing wildfire arson and should prepare for instances when wildland fires occur;

WHEREAS, to maintain the public focus on arson and prevention and to honor the firefighters who protect the public; and

WHEREAS, public awareness is one of the specific responsibilities of the U. S. Fire Administration, the International Association of Arson Investigators, Inc. and the National Wildfire Coordination Group.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT PROCLAIMED, that the first full week of May shall be designated as National Arson Awareness Week. The theme of this year's Arson Awareness Week is "Wildfire Arson – Preparedness and Prevention" and takes place from Sunday, May 7th through Saturday, May 13th 2006.

*The first Proclamation of National Arson Awareness Week took place on May 4th 1996 by Action of the Board of Directors of the International Association of Arson Investigators, Inc. on November 1, 1985 in Atlanta, Georgia*

## Fact Sheet: Wildland Fires

The threat of wildland fires for people living near wildland areas or using recreational facilities in wilderness areas is real. Advance planning and knowing how to protect structures in these areas can lessen the devastation of a wildland fire.

### Learn and teach safe fire practices.

- Build fires away from nearby trees or bushes.
- Always have a way to extinguish the fire quickly and completely.
- Never leave a fire--even a cigarette--burning unattended.

### Support adoption of local wildland-urban interface building codes and weed abatement ordinances for structures built near wooded areas.

- Use fire-resistant materials when building, renovating, or retrofitting structures.
- Install smoke alarms on every level of your home, particularly near and in sleeping areas.
- Install a residential fire sprinkler system in your home.
- Create a safety zone or defensible space to separate the home from combustible plants and vegetation.



### Check for fire hazards around home.

- Install electrical lines underground, if possible. Keep all tree and shrub limbs trimmed so they don't come in contact with the wires.
- Keep trees away from buildings and plant "fire safe" vegetation around your home.
- Remove all dead limbs, needles, and debris from rain gutters.
- Store combustible or flammable materials in approved safety containers and keep them away from the house.
- Keep chimney clean.
- If possible avoid open burning completely.

### Make evacuation plans from your home and from work.

- Plan several routes in case the fire blocks an escape route.

### Have disaster supplies on hand

- Flashlight with extra batteries
- Portable, battery-operated radio and extra batteries
- First aid kit and manual
- Emergency food and water



- Non-electric can opener
- Essential medicines
- Cash and credit cards
- Sturdy shoes
- Extra clothing

#### Develop an emergency communication plan.

- In case family members are separated from one another during a wildland fire (a real possibility during the day when adults are at work and children are at school), have a plan for getting back together.
- Ask an out-of-state relative or friend to serve as the "family contact." After a disaster, it's often easier to call long distance. Make sure everyone knows the name, address, and phone number of the contact person.

#### Fire-Resistant Building Materials

- Avoid using wooden shakes and shingles for a roof. Use tile, stucco, metal siding, brick, concrete block, rock, or other fire-resistant materials. Use only thick, tempered safety glass in large windows and sliding glass doors.

Contact your local Fire Department or American Red Cross chapter for more information on wildland fires.

#### DURING A FIRE:

- Turn on your radio to get the latest emergency information.
- Remove combustible items from around the house.
  - Lawn and poolside furniture
  - Umbrellas and fabric awnings
  - Tarp coverings
  - Firewood, fuel tanks and fuel powered equipment
- Take action to protect your home.
  - Close all doors and windows inside your home to prevent draft.
  - Take down flammable drapes and curtains and close all Venetian blinds or noncombustible window coverings.
  - Close gas valves and turn off all pilot lights.
  - Turn on a light in each room for visibility in heavy smoke.
  - Place valuables that will not be damaged by water in a pool or pond.
  - If hoses and adequate water are available, leave sprinklers on roofs and anything that might be damaged by fire, including fuel tanks.
- Be ready to evacuate all family members and pets when fire nears or when instructed to do so by local officials.



## Arson Awareness Week Sample Proclamation Request

[Print on organizational letterhead]

[Date]

The Honorable [first and last name]  
Governor of [insert name of state]  
State Capitol  
City, State, Zip

Dear Governor [insert last name]:

On behalf of the United States Fire Administration (USFA) and the International Association of Arson Investigators (IAAI), I am requesting your support in proclaiming May 7-13, 2006 as "Arson Awareness Week" in your state.

The theme of this year's Arson Awareness Week is "Wildfire Arson – Preparedness and Prevention."

Arson and other uncontrolled wildland fires pose a serious threat to lives, property, and natural resources in our rural and sub-urban communities. Conditions are particularly hazardous in the wildland-urban interface (WUI), where structures and other human developments meet, or intermingle, with forests and grasslands.

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Please join the many other states already proclaiming May 7-13, 2006, as "Arson Awareness Week."

Should you have any questions regarding this endeavor, please contact me at (xxx) xxx-xxxx at (000) 000-0000 or XXXX, the USFA Liaison, at (888) 603-3100.

Respectfully yours,  
[Your name, title and address]